

1973-02-11: [MERITOCRACY] Dennis H. Wrong "Social Inequality w/o Social Stratification."

Brings up the arguments of those who link social classes to hereditary privilege (Buckley, Mayer), but then asks "The class systems of the past have undeniably been hereditary, though permitting sufficient mobility to justify dis-tin~aishing them from caste systems. But need this be so in the future?" (p. 518) Goes on to cite Orwell, 1984 on perpetuation of rulers by nominating & indoctrinating successors. Then,

"In contrasting equal opportunity with the inheritance of social position, however, sociologists obviously mean by the former the allocation of individuals to positions according to the single criterion of demonstrated ability to carry out the position's requirements. They have usually assumed that equality of opportunity thus defined is not only morally superior to any hereditary principle but would also prove to be more humanly tolerable, eliminating the social gulf that has existed between hereditary social classes and removing the envy and sense of injustice of low-status individuals who feel deprived of social rewards only by the accident of birth". [p. 519] [Doesn't specify who these sociologists are, but likely they are Buckley & Mayer.]

But then he goes on to cite the "brilliant sociological satire *The Rise of the Meritocrscy*" and he takes it as a valid prediction of what the rule of merit would entail. He has a few caveats, but none important (as is mine, that Young describes an eyequetocracy).

The only American meritocracy he knows of is Bullitt's *To Be a Politician*. He concludes with a querying tone: "Will the decline of hereditary social classes and the trend toward meritocracy eventuate in non-egalitarian classlessness or in a new class society allocating individuals by specialized abilities rather than by birth? [plus a few like questions, then ends with his own theme:] "We are not likely to make much progress in answering them if we cling to a conceptual apparatus that does not distinguish between stratification and inequality or between stratification in general and the particular form it has taken in the hereditary class societies of the past." [p. 520]